United Nations E/CN.6/2005/NGO/15

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
27 January 2005

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Forty-ninth session
28 February-11 March 2005
Item 3 of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by Assembly of First Nations-National Indian Brotherhood, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2005/1.

05-22428 (E) 230205

Statement

One of the most important issues for First Nations women and the Assembly of First Nations is the recognition of our inherent right to self-determination as Indigenous Peoples. Like all Peoples under international law, this right guarantees our ability to freely determine our political status and pursue our economic, social and cultural development. In this regard, the UN Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is critically important to our future as Indigenous women and nations.

The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action contained eighteen commitments specifically directed at Indigenous women. Among these, one of the most significant was 230(o), which stated:

"Taking into account the need to ensure full respect for the human rights of indigenous people, consider a declaration on the rights of indigenous people for adoption by the General Assembly within the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People and encourage the participation of indigenous women in the working group elaborating the draft declaration, in accordance with the provisions for the participation of organizations of indigenous people."

The United Nations General Assembly on Beijing+ 5 was meant to build upon and advance the Beijing commitments. In order to advance the Beijing commitment regarding the Draft Declaration, the Indigenous Women's Caucus requested the inclusion of language urging Governments to adopt the Draft Declaration without further delay in its present form. Unfortunately, this issue was not included in the 2000 outcome documents, despite its overwhelming importance to Indigenous women.

We now find ourselves at the end of the United Nations first Decade on the World's Indigenous People, without a consensus on the Draft Declaration. The AFN/NIB applauds the adoption of a resolution for a second Decade, but we are extremely concerned that States have not agreed upon a continuing mandate for the Working Group on the Draft Declaration. We believe that a second Decade would be meaningless if the mandate of the Working Group is not extended. Further, we believe that the adoption of a modified draft without the consensus of the Working Group would itself represent a violation of our human rights.

As Indigenous women in Canada, we are concerned with the collective and human rights of our Peoples. These rights include the recognition of our treaties, and the right to determine our own citizenship. The Draft Declaration contains the tools we need to address these issues on a domestic level, as well as other important issues such as the elimination of violence against women, drug abuse, disease and poverty, which affect us disproportionately as Indigenous women. When our right to self-determination is recognized and implemented, we will be able to address the damage wrought by colonialism, and seek the elimination of paternalistic structures and a return to our traditional social structures.

During this review and appraisal of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, we again ask that States adopt the Draft Declaration in its present form without further delay.